United Nations

Report of the United Nations Scientific Committee on the Effects of Atomic Radiation

General Assembly

Official Records • Fifty-second Session
Supplement No. 46 (A/52/46)

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1. The United Nations Scientific Committee on the Effects of Atomic Radiation[1] held its forty-sixth session at the Vienna International Centre from 16 to 20 June 1997. Mr. A. Kaul (Germany), Mr. L. E. Holm (Sweden) and Ms. J. Lipzstein (Brazil) served as Chairman, Vice-Chairman and Rapporteur, respectively.

2. The Committee took note of General Assembly resolution 51/121 of 13 December 1996, by which, inter alia, the Assembly endorsed the Committee's plans for future activities and requested it to continue the review of important problems on radiation doses and effects and to report thereon to the Assembly at its fifty-second session.

3. In technical discussions, the Committee considered recent information on sources of radiation, exposures and their effects. Those deliberations focused on review of documents prepared by the Secretariat on subjects that the Committee had selected as the most important topics for further study. Those included: exposures from natural sources of radiation; exposures from man-made sources of radiation; medical radiation exposures; occupational radiation exposures; dose assessment methodologies; epidemiological evaluation of radiation-induced cancer; deoxyribonucleic acid (DNA) repair and mutagenesis; hereditary effects of radiation; combined effects of radiation and other agents; models, mechanisms and uncertainties at low doses; and local exposures and effects of the Chernobyl accident. The Committee made suggestions for the further development of those topics, in particular pointing out new and additional information to be considered.

4. The Committee is preparing an extensive assessment of information on radiation exposures worldwide and a comprehensive review of the biological effects of radiation, representing the state of knowledge at the end of the present millennium. Considerable experience has been acquired over many years in radiation measurements and in radiobiological research, allowing broad understanding of ionizing radiation sources and effects. The Committee will direct it attention, in particular, to investigations of the mechanisms of radiation interactions, the response of cells and the organism and the uncertainties in relating specific exposures and effects, especially at the low levels of exposure that occur at home, in the workplace and in the environment.

5. The work of the Committee is widely recognized, and most countries appreciate and support its continued activities. The Committee expressed the hope that States Members of the United Nations, the specialized agencies and national institutions would continue to assist in this work, especially by providing relevant information on the subjects of interest for the future programme of study, so that its deliberations could be based on the broadest and most up-to-date scientific and technical information.

6. The Committee decided to hold its forty-seventh session at the Vienna International Centre from 25 to 29 May 1998.

Notes

[1] The terms of reference of the Committee, which was established by the General Assembly at its tenth session in 1955, are set out in resolution 913 (X) of 3 December 1955. The Committee was originally composed of the following Member States: Argentina, Australia, Belgium, Brazil, Canada, Czechoslovakia, Egypt, France, India, Japan, Mexico, Sweden, Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and United States of America. By its resolution 3154 C (XXVIII) of 14 December 1973, the Assembly decided to increase the Committee's membership by up to five additional members, and the following Member States were appointed by the President of the Assembly in consultation with the Chairmen of the regional groups: Federal Republic of Germany, Indonesia, Peru, Poland and Sudan. By its resolution 41/62 B of 3 December 1986, the Assembly decided to increase the membership to a maximum of 21 members and invited China to become a member of the Committee. As of 24 December 1991, the Russian Federation continued the membership of the former Union of Soviet Socialist Republics in the United Nations and, accordingly, its membership of the Committee. Furthermore, by its decision 47/320 of 19 January 1993, the Assembly appointed Slovakia as a member of the Committee to fill the seat vacated by the former Czechoslovakia.